



April 5, 2019

Partners,

This letter conveys our support for a new Water Data Consortium in California and expresses our agencies' commitment to coordinate closely with this new Consortium.

Better use of data on water and ecosystems will help us meet growing demands placed on our water resources by climate change, population growth and other factors. Data on climate change impacts, for example, can help shape local agencies' infrastructure investments to protect water reliability for their customers. Other types of data can help state agencies better understand where Californians are most vulnerable to drought, flood, and water quality impacts, which allows state government and local communities to strengthen resilience before the next crisis strikes. Data is also critical to implement key state goals such as the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). For SGMA, groundwater data allows local agencies to set baselines and benchmarks for achieving groundwater sustainability and is necessary to identify opportunities to increase groundwater recharge and enable water trading where local water users find it useful.

Assembly Bill 1755 (AB 1755), the Open and Transparent Water Data Act passed in 2016, acknowledges the tremendous potential of California's water data. It requires the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), in consultation with the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), and the California Water Quality Monitoring Council (Council), to make available important water and ecosystem data for widespread use. In response, DWR convened a broad Partner Agency Team comprised of the entities listed above and other state agencies that have data, expertise, and interest in implementing AB 1755. The Partner Agency Team then developed an [AB 1755 Strategic Plan](#) to guide AB 1755 implementation.

Implementing the AB 1755 Strategic Plan promises to improve water decision-making by making water and ecosystem data more accessible, useful, and ultimately well-utilized. To achieve this potential, the strategic plan acknowledges that broad public engagement is essential. Accordingly, the Partner Agency Team has convened collaborative venues and workshops to engage stakeholders and experts. A technical group is helping develop data standards and protocols, a UC Berkeley team spearheaded a set of sample use cases to demonstrate the connection between decisions and data, and public "water data challenges" have been developed that provide opportunity for civic engagement.

Development of a shared governance model to coordinate water data will build upon this public engagement and collaboration and will ensure that AB 1755 is implemented in a manner that enables data to be accessible, useful and well-utilized. For this governance model, AB 1755 authorizes DWR to "...partner with an existing nonprofit organization, with a new nonprofit organization that the

department creates..., or with another state agency to create, operate, or maintain, or any combination thereof, the platform.” The Partner Agency Team has opted to expand investment in two existing platforms, the data.ca.gov and data.cnra.ca.gov platforms, rather than create totally new data platforms.

These two state government data platforms will be “federated,” meaning that they will be made interoperable. Besides avoiding redundancy, creating a federation of data platforms enables connection with other federal and local data platforms that meet state standards and protocols. This approach provides the potential to exponentially expand data access and utilizations. The Strategic Plan recognizes that responsibility and authority over publishing state data and operating state-run portals needs to remain with state agencies but that a “shared governance space will provide the organizational infrastructure to support broad engagement, investment, adoption, and persistence of open data infrastructure” ([Governing California’s Open Water Data Infrastructure](#), p.2).

Inclusive engagement by a broad range of stakeholders will be enabled by the formation of a Water Data Consortium, which has been developed by the Water Foundation and other stakeholders and refined by the Water Data Advisory Council, a body convened by the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. The Consortium has been designed to enable broad stakeholder participation; a continuous discourse centered around the needs of water data users; a shared venue for dialog and collaborative projects; and a dialogue to inform the state’s own use of water data. The Consortium steering committee will include state agency representatives, water managers, NGOs, and others with expertise on water data.

The California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the members of the Partner Agency Team support the creation of a Water Data Consortium and commit to close coordination between state agencies and the activities of the Consortium. Our vision for the relationship between the state agencies and the Consortium is outlined in the attached table. We welcome the Consortium’s initial focus on streamlining data submissions to state agencies.

We greatly appreciate the commitment and investment being made by a broad range of groups and leaders working to create the Consortium. This shared effort provides an early example of the collaborative spirit we expect the Consortium to nurture.

Sincerely,



Wade Crowfoot
Secretary for Natural Resources



Jared Blumenfeld
Secretary for Environmental Protection

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Open Water Data Infrastructure Activities

Tasks	Consortium	Partner Agency Team
	Gather feedback from stakeholders and make recommendations to improve data collection and publication by state agencies.	Collect, federate, and make available water and ecosystem data.
	Gather feedback from stakeholders and make recommendations to improve federation of existing and new data portals.	Maintain and expand federation of existing and future data portals.
	Develop shared data standards and protocols for voluntary adoption by organizations external to the state.	Adopt and implement state standards and protocols.
	Solicit input on and develop recommendations to improve the process of data submission to the state.	Consider and possibly implement recommendations for streamlining local agency data submission to the state.
	Develop pathway to leverage non-state funding for AB 1755 related activities.	Ensure adequate state funding for state responsibilities related to AB 1755.
	Promote innovation and lay the groundwork for pursuit of new opportunities.	Consider new opportunities developed by the Consortium.
	Build trust with data producers, providers, users, and consumers.	Build trust with data producers, providers, users, and consumers.
	Create a venue for stakeholders that includes state agencies to identify shared benchmarks and performance measures to ensure that water and ecological data are sufficient, accessible, useful, and used.	Evaluate progress on the implementation of the open water data infrastructure towards achieving identified shared benchmarks and performance measures.
	Develop, collect, and recommend use cases to increase effective decision making.	Prioritize data transformation to serve use cases, as appropriate and feasible.
	Recommend strategic direction for data standards, federation, and operation and maintenance of the data platform.	Collaborate with the Consortium on updates to the AB 1755 Strategic Plan, as needed to support water management